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A brief history of the cultural patterns of Iroquoian Tribes in New York State are outlined. The Iroquoian Tribes, known originally as Five Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca) are identified, described, and geographically placed within the state. Emphasis is placed on describing their environment, social organization, and religious beliefs. Environment includes a general description of their villages and longhouses; their foods and domestic tools, utensils, and ornaments; and clothing habits. Social organization is divided into familial or clan patterns and, very briefly, political organization. In the area of religious beliefs, their mode of warfare and ceremonial beliefs and practices are presented. This historical study ends with reservation period, giving the principal reservations in New York and Canada as indicated in a table. Illustrations are included. (CM)

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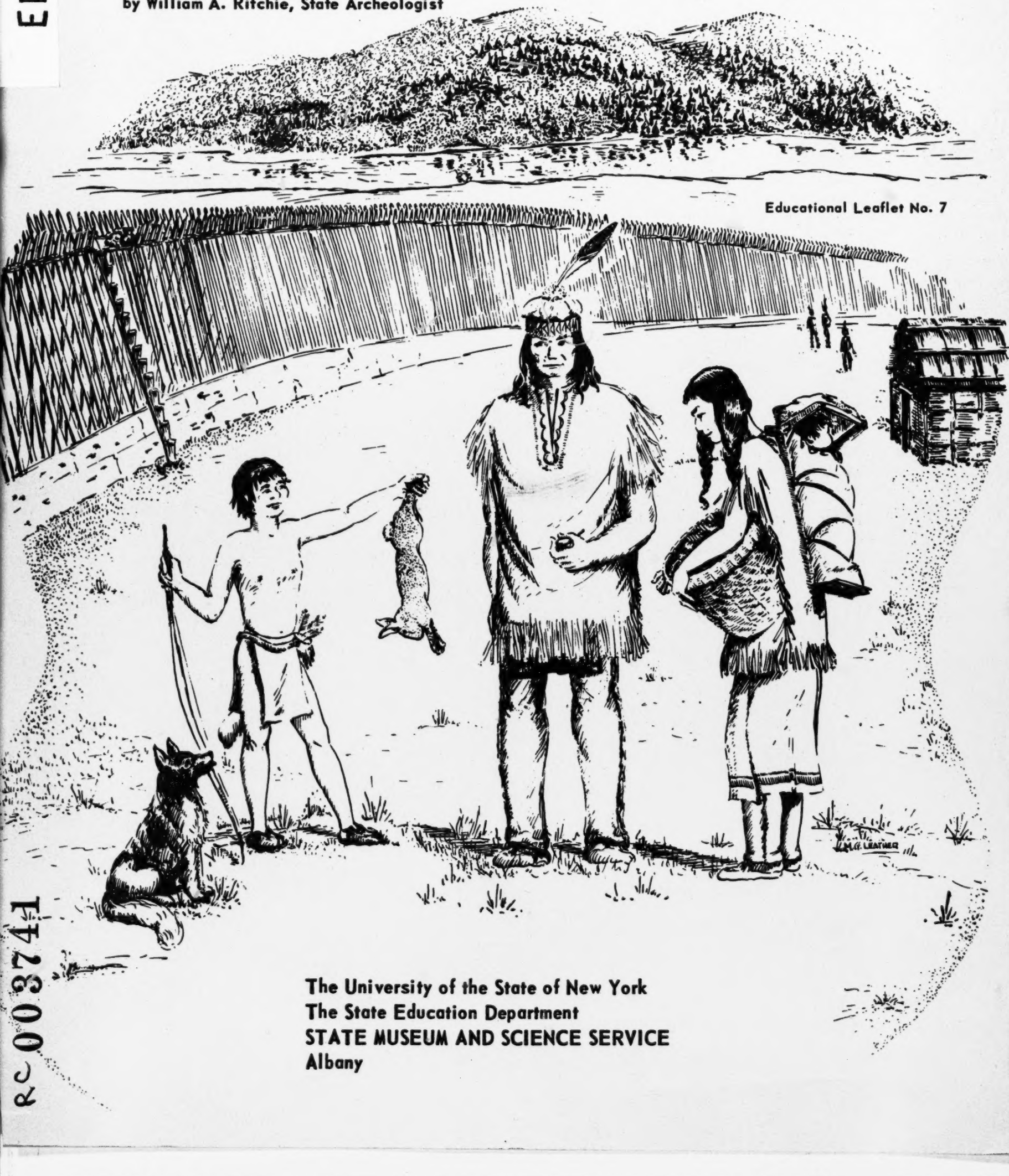
The Iroquoian Tribes

PART II OF THE INDIAN HISTORY OF NEW YORK STATE

by William A. Ritchie, State Archeologist



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THE IROQUOIAN TRIBES

At the time of the discovery by Europeans in the early part of the seventeenth century, the area now embraced by New York State was the home of Indian peoples belonging to two quite different linguistic stocks. In the Hudson valley and on Long Island dwelt tribes speaking various dialects of the Algonkian language, who were related both culturally and linguistically to the occupants of New England, lower Canada, northeastern New York and the middle Atlantic area. Of these "River Indians" in New York, we shall have more to say in a future leaflet.

Extent of Iroquois Culture

Inland, over the remainder of the State, dwelt the various groups of the Iroquois whose linguistic and cultural kinsmen claimed lands adjacent on the northwest, west and south of what came to be the Five Nations domain. These geographical relationships for the period about A.D. 1600 are indicated on the accompanying map (Fig. 1). Not shown on this map are the tribes of the southern Iroquoian family which differed markedly from the northern Iroquoian groups in most elements of culture. These were the Cherokee of western North Carolina, southwestern Virginia, eastern Tennessee and northern Georgia; the Tuscarora of eastern North Carolina, who moved up into New York in 1712 and were later admitted as the Sixth Nation to the Iroquois Confederacy; and the lesser Nottoway and Meherrin groups of Virginia, south of the James river.

In this leaflet we shall confine our description to the original Five Nations of New York: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca. Many of the data are also pertinent to the northern Iroquoian tribes as a whole which comprised additionally the Neutral, Erie, Tionontati or Tobacco Nation, Huron and Andaste or Susquehannock, since culturally they shared a large number of traits in common. It must not be supposed that this cultural similarity and linguistic affiliation implied mutual intelligibility among the tribes in question, any more than was the case among the Algonkian speakers of the Hudson valley. Among the Five Nations, Mohawk and Oneida dialects were most closely related, with Onondaga next in line. Seneca and Cayuga had most in common, culturally as well as dialectically.

Unlike the earlier prehistoric occupants of New York, whose cultures have been described in Educational Leaflet No. 6, the Iroquois bridged in the gap from pre-Columbian into historic times and, indeed, their descendants are still with us. Therefore, much additional information not obtainable by archeological techniques is available from historic and ethnographic sources, enabling a fuller understanding of their way of life. For the earlier Iroquois chapters, however, excavations are still required and a large part of the data concerning Iroquois culture, its development and connections with other groups within the area, has accrued from the investigations of the prehistorian.

The Five Nations people did not refer to themselves as "Iroquois." This term is derived from an Algonkian word meaning "real adders," thus implying the general relationship long existent between the two linguistic groups. Their own name was Ogwanonhsioni, signifying "longhouse builders, "in reference to their typical abode. Symbolically, as members of the Confederacy, they were the Hodinonhsioni, or "people of the longhouse." Similarly, each member tribe had its own name for itself. The Mohawk called themselves Kanyengehaga, or "people of the place of the flint," and they thought of themselves as "guardians of the eastern door" of the symbolic longhouse. The Oneidas were Oneyotdehaga, "people of the

standing stone." At the symbolic longhouse center were the "keepers of the council fire," the Onondaga, originally Onontaga, which means "on the mountain." The Cayuga, known to themselves as Gayokwehonu which is said to signify "where they land the boats," were, like the Oneida, the "younger brothers" of the big three. The Seneca or "great hills people," Onondewagaono, kept watch over the "western door" of the League longhouse.

When in 1609 Henry Hudson sailed to the threshold of the Mohawk country and in 1615 Champlain actually invaded it, the total population of all the five tribes may not have exceeded 5,500. These people were scattered in an east-west series of hilltop villages spanning the heart of their domain, now the central portion of the Empire State, stretching from near Schoharie creek to the Genesee Valley. Each tribe had its fixed boundaries, better known to us on the east and west than on the north and south (Fig. 1), and occupied within its territory principal towns and small hamlets.

Abundant forests covered their land, those of the northern portion being predominantly coniferous--spruce, hemlock, pine and cedar--, while elsewhere mixed coniferous and deciduous stands abounded in oak, chestnut, maple, hickory, elm, beech and birch. These, together with the marshes and natural grassy clearings, were the habitat of game and fur bearing animals which furnished the lesser part of the Iroquois diet and the materials for their clothing. Chief among these were the deer, black bear, beaver, raccoon, otter, wolf, fox, lynx, porcupine, rabbit, squirrel, wild turkey, passenger pigeon, grouse, and various water fowl.

Crayfish, fresh water clams, turtles, frogs and fish from the many streams and lakes were other ingredients of the cooking pots, as revealed by the archeologists' excavations of refuse pits and dumps on village and camp sites. Even insects, such as red ants and locust grubs, were regarded as palatable. Their chief dependence was not, however, on animal foods but on the products of farming and gathering, as will later be shown. Charred remains of certain of the wild and cultivated vegetable foods are also found in the refuse deposits.

The Iroquois seem always to have been primarily a woods people, fond of the uplands and small streams, rather than of major river valleys and lake country, as was the case with their predecessors. Many trails were made through the forest from one town to another, as well as over the greater distances between tribal lands. Of course, they also traveled in canoes, fashioned not of the paper or canoe birch which grew in the northern zone of the Algonkians, but of elm bark from available trees. There is no evidence that the Iroquois used dugouts.

Theories of Origin

Older theories of the migration of the Iroquoian people up the Ohio river, thence across the Detroit river into Ontario, and into New York via the Niagara peninsula are now largely discarded, inasmuch as cultural remains recognizable as Iroquois have not been found in the Ohio valley. The problems surrounding the origins and developments of the variations in Iroquois culture are still undergoing scrutiny by specialists in different branches of anthropology. Archeological evidence at present seems to indicate the genesis of the basic cultural pattern within the general area of their historic occupation through processes of change within the earlier Woodland pattern of their predecessors (see Educational Leaflet No. 6, p. 9-11).

The diffusion of ideas and material objects from neighboring peoples throughout the area was doubtless a continuous process in Iroquois history. Iroquois culture was not, of course, uniform at any particular time over its entire range in southeastern Ontario, New York, northern Pennsylvania and northeastern Ohio. The culture of any single tribal group may best be regarded as composite, having

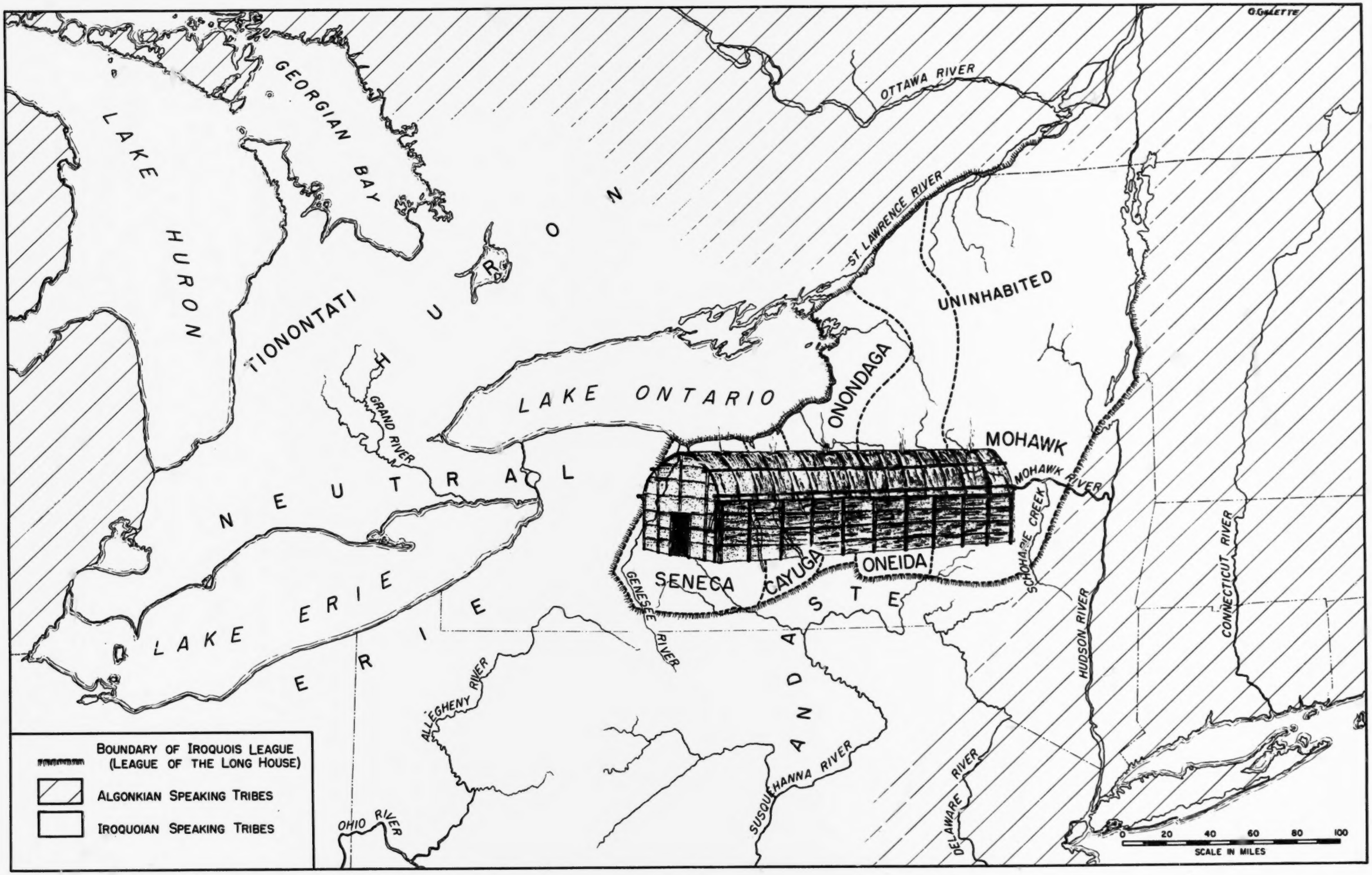

FIG. 1 LOCATION OF NORTHERN IROQUOIAN TRIBES ABOUT A.D. 1600

Modified from Beauchamp (1899) and Fenton (1940).

some traits in common with other groups, both Iroquoian and non-Iroquoian, plus special local variations arising from the inventions preserved by adaptation to regional needs or simply by specific choice or style requirements. Numerous examples in pipe and pottery styles of ornamentation, not conditioned by necessity, will illustrate the latter point.

Physical Appearance

Insofar as we can judge from a study of skeletal remains, supplemented by the sketchy accounts of early observers and the appearance of living Indians, the Five Nations Iroquois at no time in their history seem to have differed appreciably from Indian tribes of the surrounding area. The fusion of various physical strains is evident both in prehistoric and in modern times, due probably in large part to the former practice of assimilating captives and to the still extant custom of tribal and racial intermarriage. Doubtless in all periods of their history such general Indian traits as straight black hair, coppery brown skin and dark brown eyes prevailed. As in many other peoples, the stature, medium in earlier days, has increased and many tall people are now found on the Iroquois reservations. Skull form, at first narrow in relation to breadth, has yielded to forces quite unknown to us to produce an increased incidence of broad-headedness. The slender and more gracile body build of many of the earlier Iroquois gave way during historic times to, in general, a more rugged physical structure as reflected by the bony architecture. These are but a few of the characteristic and changes of a physical nature revealed by our study of the bones.

There is a common misconception concerning the sound teeth of the Indian. Actually, quite the reverse was generally true, especially in the later prehistoric and historic periods. The skulls of Iroquois Indians, early and late, rarely show a set of perfect teeth. Dental caries, abscesses, pyorrhea and other tooth and gum diseases are extremely prevalent in individuals of all ages.

Villages

The Iroquois were a village people with a strong communal sense, who inhabited semipermanent settlements which were moved only when convenient supplies of firewood, wild vegetable foods and local game gave out, or when the unfertilized agricultural soil adjacent to the village became exhausted. This has been estimated at eight to twenty or more years depending upon the location, but ten years seems a fair estimate of village tenure. Settlements, small in the beginning, grew by the aggregation of scattered bands and by the multiplication of population into towns of several hundred to over a thousand people during the period between approximately 1550 and 1675. Such towns were called "castles" by the Dutch and later by the English.

Throughout this period and even earlier, communities were usually established on high, more or less level hilltops with steep protecting slopes and were additionally secured by log palisades twenty or more feet in height. Sometimes these stockades surmounted an earthen rampart flanked by a ditch; sometimes they were set in trenches dug in the ground. Such enclosures were circular, oval, rectangular or trapezoidal in outline. Numerous examples are known of crescentic fortifications, as marked by earthworks, and of short linear defenses across a narrow neck of land, the unstockaded sides being naturally protected by very abrupt declivities. The principal living area enclosed varied from less than one to several acres in extent.

Stockade lines might be single, double or even quadruple. A common type has been described as a single line of posts set vertically in the ground, with crossing poles arranged on either side forming a "V" at the top which was enlarged by tying on pole extensions and affixing bark battlements (see cover illustration). The whole enclosure might be some thirty feet in height. The battlement or fighting platform,

reached from inside by a notched log ladder, was equipped with stones to hurl upon the enemy and with vessels of water for extinguishing fires. Such fires, kindled by fire arrows or set at the stockade base under cover of bark shields or even canoes carried by the invaders, were the great enemy of the early Iroquois towns.

Early travelers mention, and archeology confirms, the presence of outlying hamlets in the vicinity of the larger towns. Doubtless, then as now, there were people not wholly satisfied with existing conditions, dissenters who budded off the main village to found a settlement of their own. About 1700, following the close of the Iroquois Wars, many villages were moved to lower lands and were no longer palisaded.

Longhouses

Iroquois houses, both single and communal dwellings, followed a basic long-house plan (see Fig. 1 and cover illustration). This form endured until about the end of the eighteenth century, when one family, squared-log cabins of an introduced north European type came into vogue. Such homes are occasionally seen on present reservations, although they have largely been replaced by small frame houses.

Longhouse communities have been described by a number of seventeenth century travelers as containing from four or five bark lodges in a hamlet to as many as 120 dwellings in a large town, irregularly grouped or roughly ranged in streets. Unit family houses are said to have been about 20 feet in length, 15 feet in breadth and the same in height. Houses up to twice this size, described as "single-fire cabins," were probably occupied by two families. Communal dwellings and council houses had greater dimensions. The former ranged from approximately 50-150 feet in length, 15-25 feet in breadth and 15-20 or more feet in elevation. Perhaps the average multi-family home averaged some 60x18x18 feet.

House building was a cooperative effort utilizing the organized labor of a work party of friends or relatives who could expect reciprocal aid in turn. Both sexes worked together, men on the heavier tasks, women in bark-binding. This was but one of many occasions in village life illustrating the supplemental relationship between the economic activities of men and women.

Construction began by setting upright in the ground, some four or five feet apart, small forked-top logs five to eight inches in diameter and some ten feet in height to form the outline of the dwelling. These were then bound together with cross poles by means of bark strips. Roofs, made without ridge poles, were composed of a series of saplings bent into an arbor shape. In earlier times they were almost flat, and the people, especially the children, congregated on them to watch village events. Small poles were tied lengthwise across the roof supports and the house frame was ready for its bark cover.

In the springtime while the sap was still flowing freely, elm, ash or basswood bark, from which the rough outer covering had been removed, was peeled in sheets six to nine feet long and three to five feet wide. To prevent drying, curling and cracking before use, it was covered with flat stones and stored under water in streams or ponds. Some of the sturdy antler and stone "chisels" which we find on earlier sites were probably bark peelers, while the stout bone and antler "awls" and "punches" undoubtedly served to perforate the bark so that it might be tied upon the frame with bast (inner bark) strips or twisted cords. Overlapping roof

slabs were vertically affixed, the remainder of the house being "shingled" horizontally. These sheets of bark were held securely between the inner poles of the house frame and an outer set of smaller poles placed lengthwise on the roof and upright along the walls.

Smoke holes, left at intervals of some twenty feet, were provided with bark covers which could be manipulated from within by a long pole. A bark door, suspended from the top like the porthole covers on a ship, occurred at either end. Carved figures and paintings in black and red of animals representing the clans of the inmates--deer, turtle, bear etc.--are mentioned by observers as adorning the gable ends of the cabin fronts. When the village was moved, these portions of the cabins are said to have been carried to the new site.

At either end of the house was a shed-like vestibule used for the storage of firewood and food in bark barrels and other containers and, through the removal of the bark sides, for summer sleeping porches for the children. Entering the house through the vestibule, one came into a long corridor spotted at intervals with fires burning in shallow bowl-shaped hearths, one to each two families sharing opposite living compartments. Each compartment, about thirteen feet in length and six or so feet in width, was separated from the next in line by a bark-walled storage closet for personal articles, cooking utensils, hunting gear etc. Bunks for smaller children sometimes lined the closet walls.

The compartments or "rooms," open on the side toward the fire, were furnished with a pole- and bark- covered platform raised a foot or two above the floor and rendered comfortable for lounging and sleeping by an assortment of mats and furs, as well as deer and bear skins from which the hair had not been removed. A shelf overhead accommodated various goods, while from the rafters hung bunches of corn, braided together by the husks, and sundry other dried foods.

The houses and village areas of the Iroquois were fairly clean, even by our standards, the refuse being cast over the bank to form a hillside midden or into empty food storage pits dug into the ground and originally lined and covered with bark and grass. Smoke, draught, and vermin from the dogs (see cover illustration) which shared the living and sleeping quarters are mentioned as the chief annoyances of European travelers and missionaries.

Food

As previously stated, the Iroquois depended largely on hoe tillage for their food supply. Corn, beans and squashes, known among them as "supporters of life" and regarded as sacred gifts of the Creator, comprised the staples. We are told that numerous varieties of corn, beans and squashes were raised in areas cleared by fire, in natural forest clearings or on river flood plains. Tobacco and sunflowers were also grown, the latter for the oil obtainable from their seeds. Men cleared the land; women in work parties planted, hoed and harvested the crops. Corn and beans were readily storable. Squashes and pumpkins cut into strips and dried could also be kept for some time.

Besides the cultivated plants, women and girls gathered many kinds of wild vegetable foods such as nuts; berries; edible roots; leaf, stem and bark substances; fruits and fungi. Chief among these gathered food products were chestnuts, hickory nuts, butternuts, hazel nuts, acorns, strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, groundnuts, pond lily roots, Solomon's seal, Indian turnip, leaf greens of marsh marigold, various cresses, wild mints, wild leek,

wild garlic, plums, cherries, grapes, mushrooms, puffballs and morels. In addition, they gathered sassafras roots, hemlock twigs and birch bark which were used in beverages, as were also infusions of maple sap and berry juices. Maple syrup was the only sweetener and but little, if any, use was made of salt until after the historic period.

Hunting was undertaken by family groups between harvest time and mid-winter, when the villages were largely abandoned for hunting camps in the woods. The principal hunting and war weapon was a short bow and arrow tipped with a triangular flint point (Fig. 2, e) or a bone or antler head (see Fig. 3, h-j). Deadfalls and nooses fixed to bent saplings took larger game; snares and nets of fiber cords caught birds and the smaller mammals. Blowguns, made from elder stalks and employing a slender dart, were part of the equipment for securing smaller game and are but one of the numerous cultural links with tribes of the southeastern United States.

Another general exodus from the towns took place in early spring, first to the sugar bush to harvest the maple sap and make it into syrup and sugar, and again later to gather eggs and adult birds when the passenger pigeons were nesting. Temporary camps were established on these occasions in which both men and women participated.

Fishing, a pursuit of spring and summer, was done with nets weighted with notched pebbles (Fig. 2,d), weirs, barbless bone hooks (Fig. 3,l) attached to lines of twisted Indian hemp fiber, and bone harpoons (Fig. 3,f) with one or several barbs. Both men and women seem to have shared in the fishing activity and fishing parties were encountered a long way from home by early travelers.

Numerous ways of preparing corn are reported by early observers, among them hominy and samp which were boiled, often with the addition of beans, nuts or game. Soups were made from green, dried or parched corn, with or without the addition of other vegetables, and often were flavored with maple syrup or sunflower seed oil. Puddings and bread, boiled or baked in the ashes, were other favorite foods. They, too, might have additional ingredients and were eaten with sunflower seed oil, deer or bear fat, or maple sugar. The hunter or traveler could subsist on small amounts of a nutritious mixture of shelled, parched and ground corn meal and sugar.

Most Iroquois food was prepared by boiling in well-made clay pots of distinctive shape and decoration. Meat was also broiled on spits and probably roasted in the ashes along with ears of green corn.

In olden times, one meal a day was customarily served about mid-morning, but the pot was always on the fire and people ate when hungry. Food hospitality was very great; anyone dropping in, friend or stranger, was fed.

Tools, Utensils and Ornaments

As already suggested, Iroquois industries in wood, bark, bone, antler and pottery were relatively rich and varied. Their stone industry, on the other hand, was decidedly weak and limited to such items as arrowpoints (Fig. 2,e), ovate chipped flint knives (Fig.2,b) thick wedge-shaped hatched heads (Fig. 2,c) and adze blades (Fig. 2,a) of polished stone, rough stone hammers (Fig. 2,f), anvil-

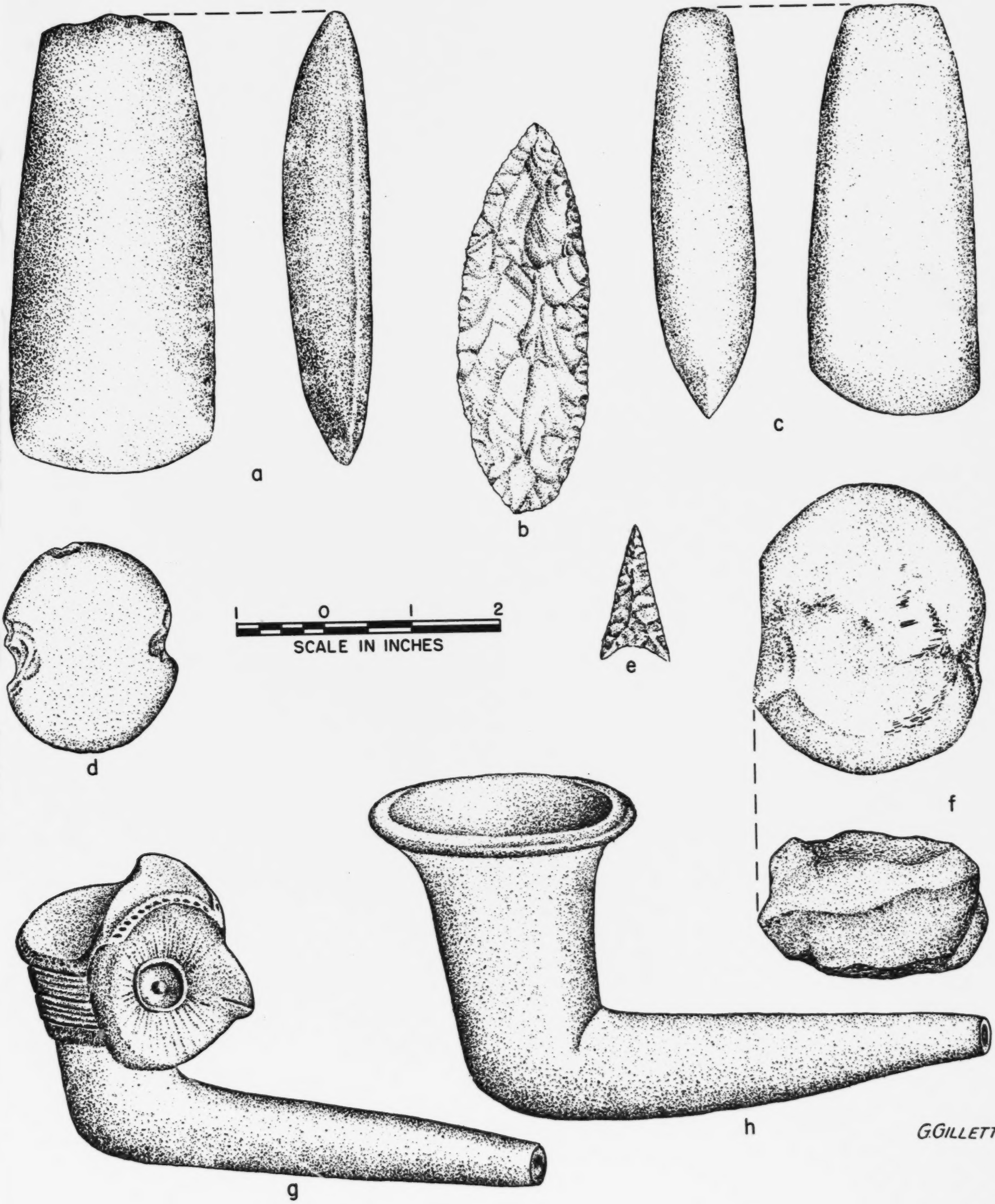

FIG. 2 TOOLS AND SMOKING PIPES OF THE IROQUOIS

stones, bun-shaped grinding stones or mullers (Fig. 4,a) shallow stone mortars (Fig. 4,a) and netsinkers (Fig. 2,d).

From bone and antler were manufactured an assortment of awls of many kinds (Fig. 3,b,c), chisels (Fig. 3,n), flint-flaking tools (Fig. 3,m), mat-weaving needles (Fig. 3,a), the hunting and fishing equipment already described, and a limited inventory of other articles which included personal ornaments, such as tubular bone beads (Fig. 3,k), various small pendants, and combs (Fig. 3,d,e) of bone and antler or sometimes wood. The combs are among the artistic achievements of the Iroquois, but all the elaborate examples belong to the historic period and were made with the aid of metal tools.

To prepare corn for most dishes, it was crushed by means of a long-handled, double-ended wooded pestle in an upright wooden mortar fashioned from a fire-hollowed log (Fig. 4,k). Other utensils connected with the food activity comprised basket sieves and baskets plaited from black ash splints (Fig. 4,d); elm bark sap containers and mixing bowls (Fig. 4,c); wooden bowls of various sizes (Fig. 4,f) with cups, spoons (Fig. 4,f), ladles and pot stirrers; box turtle shell bowls and bark storage barrels (Fig. 4,j).

Iroquois pottery is distinguishable by a more or less globular, generally smooth body with rounded base, constricted neck and outflaring collared rim which bears the whole or major share of the decoration. The characteristic decoration consists of a pattern of incised lines in angular designs, usually spoken of as chevrons or triangle complexes (Fig. 4,h). Another pottery tradition makes use of a notched rim which became elaborated into many styles during the historic period (Fig. 4,g).

Fig. 2 Tools and smoking pipes of the Iroquois

a Polished stone adze (front and side views)
b Chipped stone knife
c Polished stone celt or ax head (side and front views)
d Notched pebble netsinker
e Chipped stone arrowpoint
f Simple stone hammer (side and end views)
g Owl effigy clay pipe
h Plain trumpet clay pipe

Fig. 3 Tools and ornaments of the Iroquois

a	Mat-weaving needle of bone
b,c	Bone awls
d	Antler effigy comb of historic period
e	Prehistoric antler comb
f	Bone harpoon
g	Antler figurine of historic period
h,i,j	Bone and antler arrowpoints
k	Bone bead
l	Bone fish hook
m	Antler flaker
n	Antler chisel
o	Brass spiral ear ornament of historic period
p,q,r	Silver brooches of historic period (note Masonic emblem on q)
s	Bone dehairing tool

Pottery was evidently not made by coiling, but rather by modeling a lump of plastic clay tempered with crushed crystalline rock to prevent undue shrinkage and cracking during the firing process. This baking took place in open fires in the presence of ample oxygen, resulting in light shades of brown, tan or terra-cotta. No use was made of slips or painting, nor were there lugs or handles (at least among the Five Nations Iroquois), but effigies of the human face or figure occur among some groups, especially the Onondaga and Oneida.

While women were the potters, men modeled or carved the smoking pipes of clay or stone (Fig. 2,g,h). Considerable esthetic sense and skill are shown in the bowl effigies of mammals, birds (Fig. 2,g) and men.

Little is known of early Iroquois art expressions beyond those preserved for us in the pottery, pipes and to a limited extent in the bone and antler articles, especially combs, already mentioned. It is of interest to note that while pottery designs are always rectilinear, most quilled, beaded and moosehair designs are predominantly curvilinear and fit into the general historic art pattern of the northeast as a whole. These embroidered techniques are found on articles of clothing, bags (Fig. 4, e), burden straps and probably on other objects not preserved from the prehistoric period. The art styles of the area are of uncertain origin, and some, especially the rather realistic plant and floral representations so well depicted in the later beadwork, seem to be of European, particularly French, inspiration.

Iroquois silver work, such as the brooches worn as clothing fasteners (Fig. 3,p-r), headbands, bracelet and earrings, was in most cases manufactured for Indian trade by English silversmiths both in Britain and Canada. There also developed a native industry utilizing silver coinage obtained by exchange for furs and land. While Scottish and other European designs prevailed, some minor variations are said to have been effected by the native craftsmen.

Clothing

Because of its highly perishable nature, no examples of early Iroquois clothing have survived, but there is historic evidence to inform us that clothing was origi-

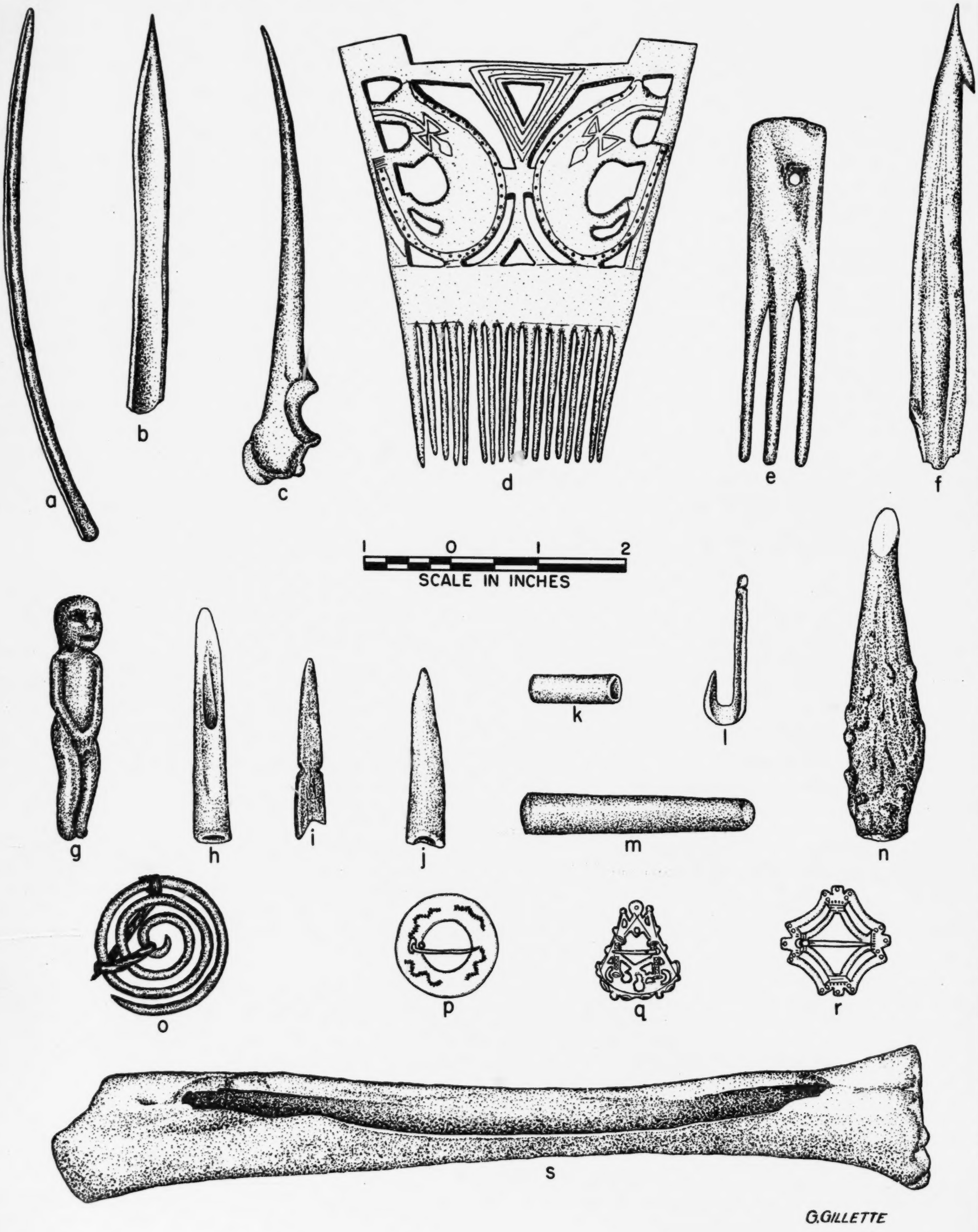

FIG. 3 TOOLS AND ORNAMENTS OF THE IROQUOIS

nally of skin, chiefly of the deer, tanned with animal brains. Dehairing tools cut from a deer leg bone (Fig. 3,s) are common on some prehistoric sites. No cloth was made; but bags, nets, burden straps (Fig. 4,d) and other things were woven from cordage derived from twisted strands of bark and wild Indian hemp fibers. From braided or woven cornhusks were made baskets (Fig. 4,b), mats, moccasins (Fig. 4,i) masks (Fig. 5,d,e) and other articles of clothing, household and ceremonial usage.

The dress of men (see cover illustration) and boys consisted of a tunic-like shirt to which, in cold weather, separate sleeves might be attached by tying. This overlapped the breechclout held in place by a belt which also supported the leggings. A kilt, or short skirt-like garment, and moccasins completed the costume, except for the winter use of furred robes made of single bear, wolf or panther skins or compounded of the smaller pelts of otters, martens, raccoons etc. In the case of the larger mammals, especially bear and wolf, the anterior skull portions including the jaws and teeth were sometimes left attached to the hide. When worn, they projected above the head of the wearer in an impressive manner described in early documents and confirmed by the evidence of modeled pipes and grave finds. Winter footgear is said to have included cornhusk and fur overshoes.

For women (see cover illustration) and girls the breechclout was omitted, the kilt became a longer dress, and their shorter leggings were tied above the knees. In summer, young children ran naked; men wore only the breechclout and women the skirt. A small, round, tightly fitting cap of deerskin, usually decorated with an eagle plume at the top and worn exclusively by males, was the only type of hat (see cover illustration).

By the middle of the seventeenth century, woolen cloth and blankets began replacing native forms which very largely disappeared within the next 150 years. The costumes worn by contemporary Iroquois on festive or ceremonial occasions are generally an individually acceptable mixture with non-Iroquoian items.

In early days men wore their hair roached, i.e., cut short and left standing up in a sort of cockscomb along the middle of the head. One or both sides might be completely shaved or a braided lock might be worn on side or back of head. Women either allowed their hair to hang loosely or in tied bunches down their backs. As a vermin repellant, both sexes greased head and body with animal fats, which quickly turned rancid. Young men, especially, painted their faces and even tattooing of face and body was practiced.

Some of the Iroquois "jewelry" is found by the archeologist and consists for the earlier period of necklaces of tubular bone beads (Fig. 3,k); drilled teeth of the bear, wolf, dog, lynx, elk and other animals; various bone pendants and other minor things. With the dawn of the historic period and the Iroquois Wars, many new devices were adopted from foreign sources, both Indian and white, such as stone and shell pendants and necklace elements; glass beads; copper and brass ornaments of numerous kinds, including earrings (Fig. 3,o), bracelets and breast ornaments.

Fig. 4 Domestic utensils and articles of clothing of the Iroquois

a Shallow stone mortar and muller
b Twined woven corn husk basket
c Elm bark mixing bowl
d Splint carrying basket with burden strap
e Quill and bead decorated leather pouch
f Carved wooden bowl and wooden spoon
g Clay cooking pot of notched rim type
h Clay cooking pot of incised collar type
i Twined woven corn husk moccasin
j Elm bark storage barrel
k Large wooden mortar and pestle

Social Organization

Iroquois tribal groups were organized into clans which varied in number among the Five Nations from three to ten. While the clans were named for animals, e.g., Bear, Wolf, Deer, Turtle, Hawk, Snipe etc., it was not believed that the members were descended from these animals, and the use as food of the name animal of one's clan was not forbidden. Clans cut across tribal lines; those like the Bear, Wolf and Turtle which occurred in each of the confederated tribes probably being the oldest.

Children belonged to and took their mother's clan name, the father's line being disregarded in reckoning descent, an arrangement referred to by anthropologists as matrilineal descent. The father's clansmen were, however, reckoned among one's close kin. The matrilineal lineage or family, two or more of which composed a clan, comprised a principal matron (often, but not necessarily, the oldest woman), her sons and daughters, the male and female children of her female descendants and their descendants through the female or clan-bearing side.

Marriage within the clan, either tribal or intertribal, was taboo. Marriages were generally arranged by the chief matrons of the two families involved, economic considerations being primary. A good provider and a good housekeeper were considered a promising couple. No important rites were observed, a simple exchange of food presents sufficing to unite the spouses. Separation was equally easy if desired by either mate, but efforts were made by both families to keep the marriage intact.

It was customary for the new couple to reside in the longhouse of the bride's family, a practice described as matrilocal residence. Here, the husband came under the authority of his wife's parents, grandparents and other relatives, and his tenure depended upon good behavior. Because his children also belonged to his wife's clan, according to rules of descent, dominance over their upbringing and behavior was exercised by her family. Inheritance also passed in the female line. Therefore, offspring inherited not from their father but from their mother and her lineage. The father's sisters' sons, being of his clan, comprised his heirs. Wives did not inherit from their husbands, and vice versa, for the same reason.

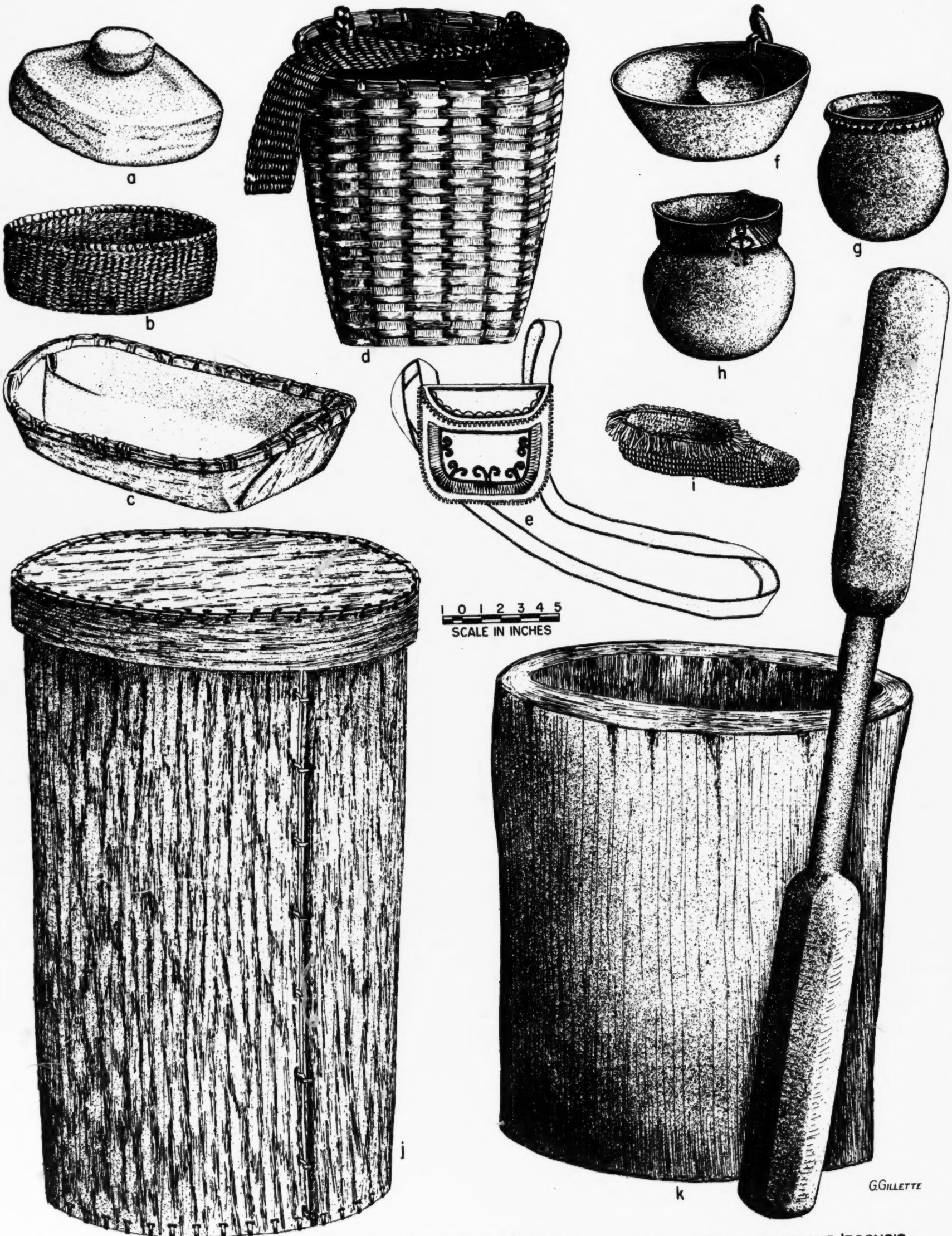

FIG. 4 DOMESTIC UTENSILS AND ARTICLES OF CLOTHING OF THE IROQUOIS

The matrilineal family was also important in other ways. It performed economic, ceremonial and political tasks, owned household property and generally functioned cooperatively, under the leadership of its head matron, as the basic unit of Iroquois society. Among its most valuable possessions were various titles, such as sachemships, names of chiefs and ceremonial officials. These were assigned by the matron to child successors after careful consultation among the leading women of the family group. Sachemships, as we shall see, were hereditary in certain "noble" families.

A group of matrilineal families, each consisting of three or four generations (perhaps 30 to 200 living members), comprised, as has been noted, a clan. The Iroquois had a still larger unit of society, namely, a moiety or phratry. As the name indicates, there were but two of these in each tribe, each embracing certain clans. The moieties, or groups of clans, functioned in historic times as social and ceremonial, rather than as political units. Members of one moiety played against the other in team games, especially those following ceremonies. Funeral services for one moiety were conducted by the opposite phratry which condoled with the bereaved group and, in the case of deceased chief, gave it wampum to "wipe away the tears" and officiated in "raising up" a successor.

The clan, on the other hand, functioned in adoption of captives, in law and in politics. The clan bestowed the ordinary names on its members, arranged certain feasts and ceremonies and aided its members to redress their grievances. It protected them against vengeance, in cases of murder committed by a member, usually by paying or contributing to a blood price or wergild paid to the kin or clan of the deceased.

Political Organization

Perhaps the most notable achievement of the New York Iroquois was their political organization known as the League of Five (later Six) Nations, concerning the formation of which a great deal of conflicting and confusing information has appeared. This in part arises from the fact that the League, like other institutions of Iroquois culture, underwent such changes with time and circumstance that it appeared in a somewhat different light to numerous observers at various periods. Its real beginnings will doubtless always remain obscure and, in common with many events in world history, they have become invested with a body of myth and legend.

Fig. 5 Ceremonial and council articles of the Iroquois

a,b,c Wooden masks used by the False Face Society
- a Spoon-lipped doorkeeper mask. (note sacred bags of tobacco tied near the part in the hair)
- b Crooked-mouth doctor mask
- c Whistling beggar mask

d,e Braided and twined corn husk masks used by the Husk Face Society
f Wooden water durm and drumstick used by False Face Society
g Box turtle rattle used in Women's Bread Dance
h Hickory bark rattle used by False Face Society
i Gourd rattle used in Harvest Festival
j Snapping turtle rattle used by False Face Society
k Wooden flute used by the Little Water Society
l Invitation wampum string attached to stick, notched to show date of event
m Council wampum belt representing the Ever-growing Tree. (Displayed whenever the Constitution of the Six Nations was recited)
n Condolence wampum

The traditional founders were Deganawidah and Hiawatha, the latter subsequently transferred and transformed by Longfellow. The legendary purpose behind the Confederacy is phrased as the desire to unite the warring brother nations of the Iroquois into a league for peace in which arbitration of differences would supplant force of arms, a kind of primitive League of Nations. After many vicissitudes on the p of the founders, the story says that five of the New York tribes were induced to "sit under the Tree of the Great Peace," a privilege declined by their neighboring kinsmen. Since in theory those tribes which failed to accept the "Great Peace based on the union and law" were potential enemies of the League, they were, paradoxically, ultimately destroyed as organized tribes in the so-called Wars of the Iroquois. These conflicts took place between 1626, when the Mahican were driven out of the eastern Mohawk valley, and 1680, when the Iroquois raided the Illinois and Miami tribes far to the west of Iroquoia.

Astute modern historians have seen an underlying economic motive behind the development and activities of the Confederacy beginning with the appearance, early in the seventeenth century, of conflicting Euopean powers, Dutch, French and English, and their subsequent struggles for monopoly in the fur trade and for colonial imperialism. In these long and bitter struggles the various groups of the Iroquois, including the Huron and other neighboring kinsmen of the Five Nations, played a key part. Even the cohesive force of the League did not always suffice to maintain harmony among its member tribes as the competition for markets was intensified.

The Indians' growing dependence on the fur trade with the whites to supply what they came to regard as necessities of life, combined with the latter's greed and intrigue, created bitter rivalries among the Iroquois groups for the coveted status of middlemen. This appears to have been the real factor underlying the succession of intertribal wars which brought destruction in turn to the Huron, Tionontati, Neutral, Erie and Adaste (between 1649-1675) at the hands of the "Keepers of the Great Peace." Although ultimately the replacement of the greater

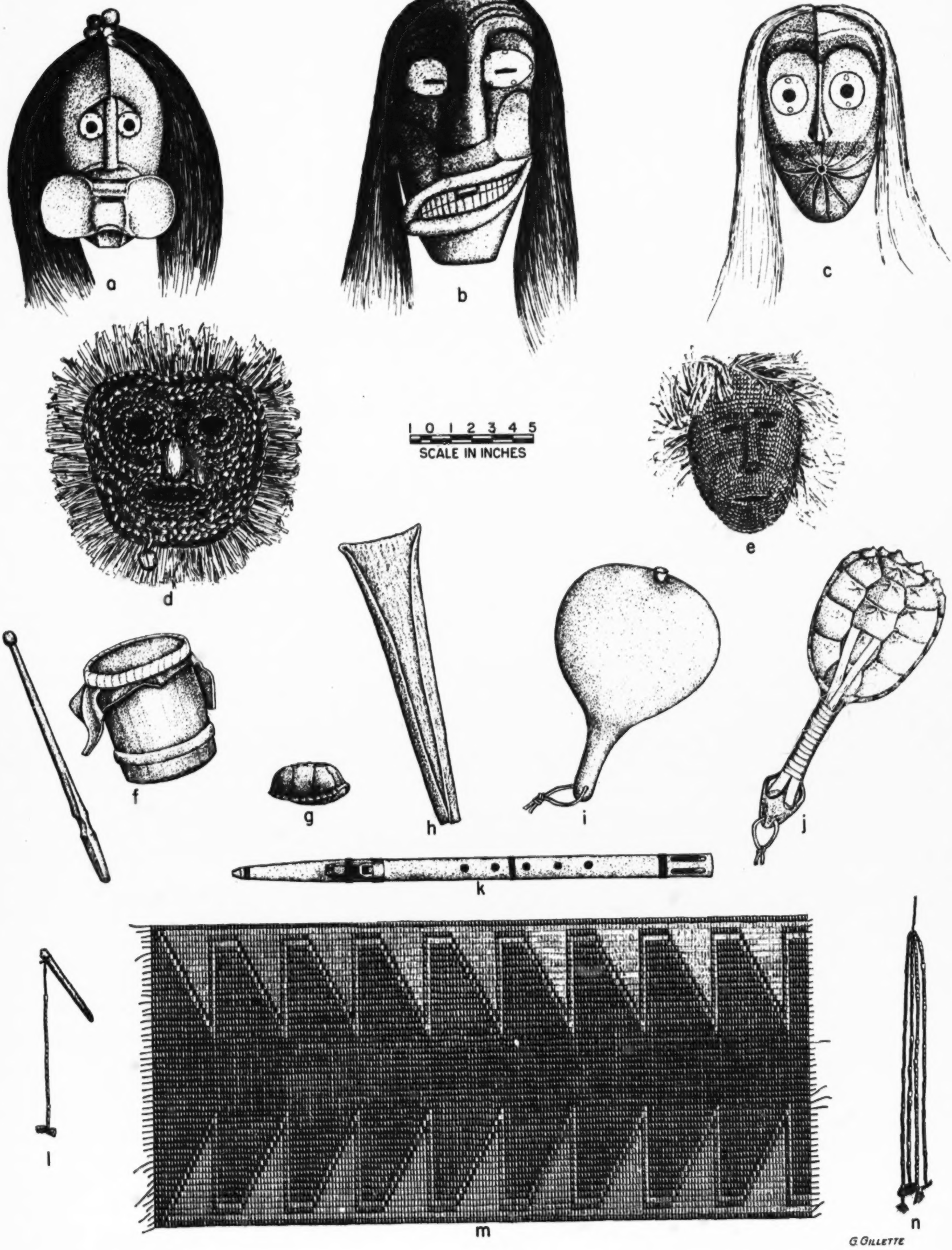

FIG. 5 CEREMONIAL AND COUNCIL ARTICLES OF THE IROQUOIS

part of native material culture with European devices and the political alliance of the Five Nations (the Oneida excepted) with the English were to prove disastrous, these far-reaching implications could not have been anticipated. The Iroquois, like human societies everywhere and at all times, acted in the interest of immediate results.

The mechanism of the League in later historic times is much better understood than its formation and early growth. Affairs of the constituent tribes were self-managed on a states' rights basis. The ruling body, which met in Grand Council at Onondaga in the heart of the symbolic longhouse, comprised 50 civil sachems whose duty was to arbitrate matters of war, peace, foreign policy and intertribal dispute. Fear of political displacement was absent since, as earlier noted, these chieftainships were hereditary offices held for life upon good behavior.

All of the important clans and villages were represented at the National Council, not on an equal basis, however. There were 14 delegates from the Onondaga, 10 for the Cayuga, 9 each for the Mohawk and Oneida, and but 8 for the powerful Seneca. Because the principle of majority rule was unknown, this fact was meaningless. Unanimous agreement was required to pass any measure. Concurrence of opinion was reached in clan and tribal councils prior to the chiefs' conclave at Onondaga, where voting was by respective groups. In this general assembly there was no ranking officer, a moderator being appointed to conduct the discussions.

Some difference of function, however, existed among the delegates, the Onondaga chiefs being the keepers of the council fire and wampums. Shell wampum beads, purple or white in color, were arranged either in strings (Fig. 5,1,n) or in the form of belts (Fig. 5,m) and constituted, in the absence of a system of writing, a mnemonic record of the sessions. They were, in effect, the official documents of the Confederacy. Some years ago those that remained in Onondaga hands were transferred by sale to the perpetual custody of The University of the State of New York and may be seen in the New York State Museum collections.

The Great Council was not self-convening, but meetings could be called by any tribal council as need arose. Invitation wampums (Fig. 5,1) were dispatched to all member tribes of the Confederacy and the response was general, for the sessions of the National Council were occasions also of great social activity attended by games, dances, feasts and high merriment.

The status of civil sachem, being hereditary in certain family lineages, was open to few. Iroquois society made provision for the recognition of gifted individuals who were not eligible for the supreme titles by creating the institution of "pine tree" sachems, coveted but non-hereditary titles open to women as well as men. Chosen by a tribal council for distinguished ability in oratory and wisdom, candidates were confirmed by the Grand Council and could occupy seats and participate in discussion at the general sessions but were permitted no vote. Nevertheless, as counselors to the sachems, they possessed great influence and prestige. Some of the most eminent Iroquois statesmen belonged to this official category.

Mode of Warfare

War chiefs stood quite apart from civil sachems who were pledged to "protect the Great Peace." Their selection depended upon great personal courage and military acumen. While theoretically there could be no warfare without League

sanction, in practice, this tenet was often violated by separate action. Indeed, private warfare on the part of the Mohawk or Seneca, while the other tribes remained neutral, is a matter of recorded history. War parties were recruited from among the young men, commonly including the sons and grandsons of the war leaders. Women had no place in war, nor did clans as such participate. Before taking to the field, the members are said to have ritually purified themselves, feasted and danced about a war pole symbolically striped with red paint.

Ambush and surprise attacks were the rule. Weapons in earlier times comprised the bow and small, triangular, flint-tipped (Fig. 2,e) arrow, war club headed with wooden ball or antler prong, wooden or bark shield and body armor made of wooden rods fastened together with thongs. Beginning about 1640, these were gradually replaced with guns and even earlier with iron hatchets of variety of forms culminating in the pipe tomahawk of the late Colonial period.

Scalps and prisoners were sought, the latter being tortured and burned at the home village if not adopted. Adoption was in the hands of the women who thus replaced a relative lost in war. Whole nations might be adopted by League action. Thus, the Tuscarora were admitted in 1722, the Delaware, Tutelo and Nanticoke between 1762 and 1765. Emphasis on a military career developed along with European contacts and, after about 1660, the prestige of war chiefs began to overshadow that of civil sachems in Iroquois society. From the status of a comparatively obscure and isolated people impelled by peaceful cooperative motives centered about social and governmental ideals, the Iroquois had, through the historic accident of geographic position, trade and political involvement in a wholly new set of European cultural values, become gradually transformed into a more individualistic people conscious of their power and prestige.

Ceremonialism

Like primitive folk of other times and places, the Iroquois in the state of their culture could have little scientific understanding of the world of which they formed a part. The uniformity inherent in the interaction of events, or what we call the "laws of nature," was quite unknown to them. Yet, as human beings, they sought answers to the cause and effect relationships which they observed, as well as explanations of the great phenomena of life, illness and death.

Like other peoples, too, what they could not comprehend, they attributed either to the presence of anthropomorphized supernatural beings or to magical power called "orenda." Such power was conceived either as being exercised by these beings on behalf of or in opposition to man's will, or existing by itself alone and capable of being harnessed and directed by man through the employment of magical formulas, spells or incantations.

Relics of this type of thinking occur in our own fairy tales in such magic phrases as "open sesame." Power of this impersonal kind was likewise imputed to charms or amulets worn to protect against injury or to insure the wearer of certain extra abilities.[1] Thus, a talisman formed of a weasel skin could confer the savage cunning of this animal, while a gorget made from the skull of a brave human victim transferred to the wearer this esteemed virtue. The analogy of the rabbit's foot for good luck is well known, even today.

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1 Perhaps the antler female figurines (see Fig. 3, g) often found in Iroquois graves of the historic period belong rather in the category of amulets than of strictly decorative devices. They have been inspired by the diffusion and reinterpretation of certain Christian concepts relating to the Virgin Mary.

To deal with the unseen world about them the Iroquois had well developed techniques, many of which were patterned upon behavior considered appropriate toward human beings. For example, since men enjoy the recognition of gifts and services to other men, the supernatural beings were likewise throught to respond to thanks offerings, sacrifices, praise and prayer. This worldwide concept found expression among the Iroquois in a whole series of thanksgiving festivals directed toward the deities, great and small, which were thought to control the necessities of existence. To illustrate, the ceremonial calendar provided for a "Planting Festival" or "Seed Dance" in the spring, a "Green Corn Festival" when the harvest began, and a "Harvest Festival" in the autumn when the ripe maize was gathered in. Observances of a similar order honored the spirits of the maple tree in the "Sap Dance" of early spring and the wild strawberry in the "Strawberry Dance" held in late May or June.

An all inclusive thanksgiving ritual formed part of the principal ceremonial observance of the year, the "Midwinter" or "New Year Festival." This began on the fifth day of the second new moon following the winter solstice, usually early in February, and lasted nearly a week. It was dedicated to one of the chief gods in the Iroquois pantheon, known as Teharonhiawagon, the "Master of Life" or "Holder of the Heavens," who was conceived as the ruler of the sky world and the father of life on earth.

The underlying concept of the complex ceremonialism of the "New Year Festival," which is still observed in the so-called "pagan longhouse" religion of the reservation Iroquois, seems definitely related to the ancient and widespread idea of an elemental conflict between the forces of life and death in the world. As phrased by the Iroquois, the power of the Life God is weakened in his contest with the Winter God and must be revived symbolically through magical rites performed by man. Thus, his powers will be restored and with them the means of sustenance to mankind. In the first phase of the ceremony the old fires are extinguished and new ones lighted in every house by special agents of the priesthood in charge of the ceremony. The arrival of the New Year is then announced.

The populace, congregated in the council house for the next part of the ceremony, listens to a long recitation or prayer of thanksgiving to the Master of Life specifically enumerating the elements of nature for which man's gratitude is due. Beginning with "Our Mother," the earth, the various categories of the plant world from grasses to trees are mentioned, followed by the cultivated plants, bodies of water, game animals, heavenly bodies, etc. etc.

Fire rites follow for the expulsion of evil spirits which cause disease and death. Then comes the "Dream Festival," of three days' duration, when the magical power of the personal guardian spirits of the people is restored by singing again their special songs. Several of the secret societies perform at this time, including the False Face Company of masked healers.

Formerly, on the morning of the last day, there was observed the sacrifice of the white dog. Ritually killed by strangulation and suitably bedecked with paint, feathers and wampum, the body of the animal was burned with sacred tobacco incense on an altar in an invocatory gesture to Teharonhiawagon for his continued blessings.

Other principal Iroquois deities included the grandmother of Teharonhiawagon, known as Ataentsic, who with her husband figures in the creation story. She brought

life to the earth and became in time the divinity of death. In the paradoxical role of Ataentsic we apparently see another expression of the ages-old earth mother who supports an ever dying and reviving vegetation.

The conflict of good and evil in the world was symbolized by the struggle between the beneficent Teharonhiawagon and his brother Tawiskaron, who brought into being the noxious forms of life. Heno, the "Thunderer," brought the lifegiving rains and with his roaring and lightning-flashing eyes frightened away the evil spirits who dwelt in the underworld. Finally, there was the powerful God of War, Agreskwe, who was identified also with the sun and in whose honor were offered the first fruits of the chase. Human captives were sometimes burned at the stake to sustain his favors.

The list of minor deities and nature beings is much too long for inclusion here. The latter include elf-like and ghost-like creatures, giants and grotesque animals of many kinds. Iroquois culture possessed a rich content of myth and legend which is referred to in works listed in the suggested references.

As in other societies, myth and ritual among the Iroquois were closely related. Thus, the various secret societies, chief among which were the False Face Company and the Little Water Society, have legendary founders whose initial instruction must be followed in the ritualism of the order. They are mainly healing societies devoted to the exorcism of evil spirits which, under the influence of witchcraft or other mechanisms, were thought to invade the body and cause illness and death. Each had its special songs, dances and paraphernalia, comprising masks (Fig. 5, a-e); water drums (Fig. 5,f); flutes (Fig. 5,k); wands; gourd, bark and tortoise-shell-rattles (Fig. 5,g-j).

The emphasis on healing betokens the universal fear of death when, according to Iroquois belief, man became a disembodied spirit or ghost. At first earth-bound and dangerous, this spirit haunted the grave site seeking offerings of food. If not appeased, the ghost could retaliate by causing sickness. Its dismissal to the land of the dead, far to the west of but similar and superior to the familiar world, was accomplished by complying with its wishes for food, performing a mourning rite and by never again mentioning directly the name of the deceased.

In earlier times the clothed body of the deceased, soon after death, was bound in a skin shroud in a flexed position with knees against body and arms bent with hands before face, an extremely ancient mode. It was placed, usually without offerings, in a grave pit about three feet deep, lined and covered with bark before the admission of the earth. For reasons not yet understood, pottery vessels containing food and probably water together with personal ornaments, tools, weapons and smoking pipes, began to be interred with the dead after the advent of the historic period. Soon after the beginning of the eighteenth century flexed burial went out of fashion to be replaced by the European type burial of the extended body in a wooden board coffin. Articles thought to be useful in the spirit world, however, were still included, at least into the early part of the reservation period after 1800.

Reservation Period

The American Revolution brought to an end the power of the Iroquois who, with the exception of the Oneida, had continued to support the British, their trade allies since 1664, against the revolting colonists. The war's close ushered in the

reservation period bringing many changes in social and economic life. Enough remains even today, however, of language, social organization and ceremonial customs to provide considerable information of value in the reconstruction of earlier periods of Iroquois history.

At present, while many of the Five Nations people have been assimilated into the cities, the majority continue to occupy reservations in Canada and New York. The principal reservations are indicated in the table opposite.

From these figures it may readily be seen that the "People of the Longhouse," whose culture we have briefly outlined in this leaflet, are not a "vanishing race." Their present numbers probably exceed their total population at any period in their eventful history. They have long been a well-mixed group, this process of intermarriage with other Indian and non-Indian peoples having gone on for many generations, along with continuous changes of detail in the cultural pattern. In these respects, the story of the Iroquois has parallels with most of the other nations of the world.

Note: All of the Indian artifacts figured in this leaflet are from the New York State Museum collections. The Clark Hall of Iroquois Indian Groups contains six famous, life-size dioramas depicting Iroquois agriculture, industry, ritual, government, warfare, and hunting. A pamphlet containing black and white plates of these groups is available from the Museum Sales Desk for 10¢, and a set of six colored postcards of the groups may be obtained for 30¢ (including postage) by addressing the News Stand, New York State Education Building, Albany 1, New York.

Other Iroquois exhibits include: a barkhouse, burials, wax and plaster models of food plants, and various artifacts of stone, wood, clay, bone, and antler.

From the historic period are clothing, games, household utensils, a fine collection of masks, wampum belts, and other ceremonial objects.

A one-hour Indian lesson which generally includes handling artifacts, visiting the barkhouse, and discussing the dioramas may be arranged for school classes and other educational groups.

For details and appointments, contact the Museum Education Supervisor (GR 4-5843) several months in advance of the visit.

PRINCIPAL IROQUOIS RESERVATIONS IN NEW YORK

Reservation	Population*	Acreage	Location
St. Regis	2,115 Mohawk	38,390	Spanning the International Boundary between New York and Canada at Hogansburg, N. Y. About one-third of acreage in New York
Cattaraugus	1,821 Seneca 315 Cayuga	21,680	On Cattaraugus creek southwest of Buffalo, N. Y.
Allegany	2,211 Seneca	30,469	On the Allegheny river at Salamanca, N. Y.
Onondaga	1,111 Onondaga 469 Oneida	6,100	Near Syracuse, N. Y.
Tonawanda	1,762 Seneca	7,549	On Tonawanda creek north of Akron, N. Y.
Tuscarora	625 Tuscarora	5,700	Near Niagara Falls, N. Y.

* Population figures are from 1961 enumeration, courtesy of Director of Indian Services. These figures are for enrolled Iroquois, that is, children of Iroquois (except Mohawk) mothers. Enrolled Mohawks are those individuals whose fathers are Mohawk.

PRINCIPAL IROQUOIS RESERVATIONS IN CANADA

Reservation	Population*	Acreage	Location
Caughnawaga	3,946 Mohawks	12,476	On the south bank of the St. Lawrence River in the County of Laprairie, P. Q.
Oka	695 Mohawks	2,025	On the north shore of Lake of Two Mountains, Ottawa River, in the County of Two Mountains, P. Q.
St. Regis Cornwall Island	2,539 Mohawks	9,220	On the south bank of the St. Lawrence River in the Township of Dundee, County of Huntington, P. Q. also Cornwall Island.
Oneida	1,766 Oneidas	5,271	In the Township of Delaware, County of Middlesex, Ontario

Reservation	Population*	Acreage	Location
Gibson	205 Mohawks and Algonkins	14,058	In the eastern portion of the Township of Gibson, Muskoka District, Ont.
Six Nations	8,059 Cayugas, Onondagas, Senecas, Mohawks, Oneidas, and Tuscaroras	44,914	Near Brantford on the Grand River in Counties of Brant and Haldimand, Ont.
Tyendinaga	1,943 Mohawks	17,455	On the Bay of Quinte in the southern part of the Township of Tyendinaga, County of Hastings, Ont.

* 1962 Records of Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa

Statistics through the courtesy of Indian Affairs Branch, Canadian Citizenship and Immigration Department.

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January 1963

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